

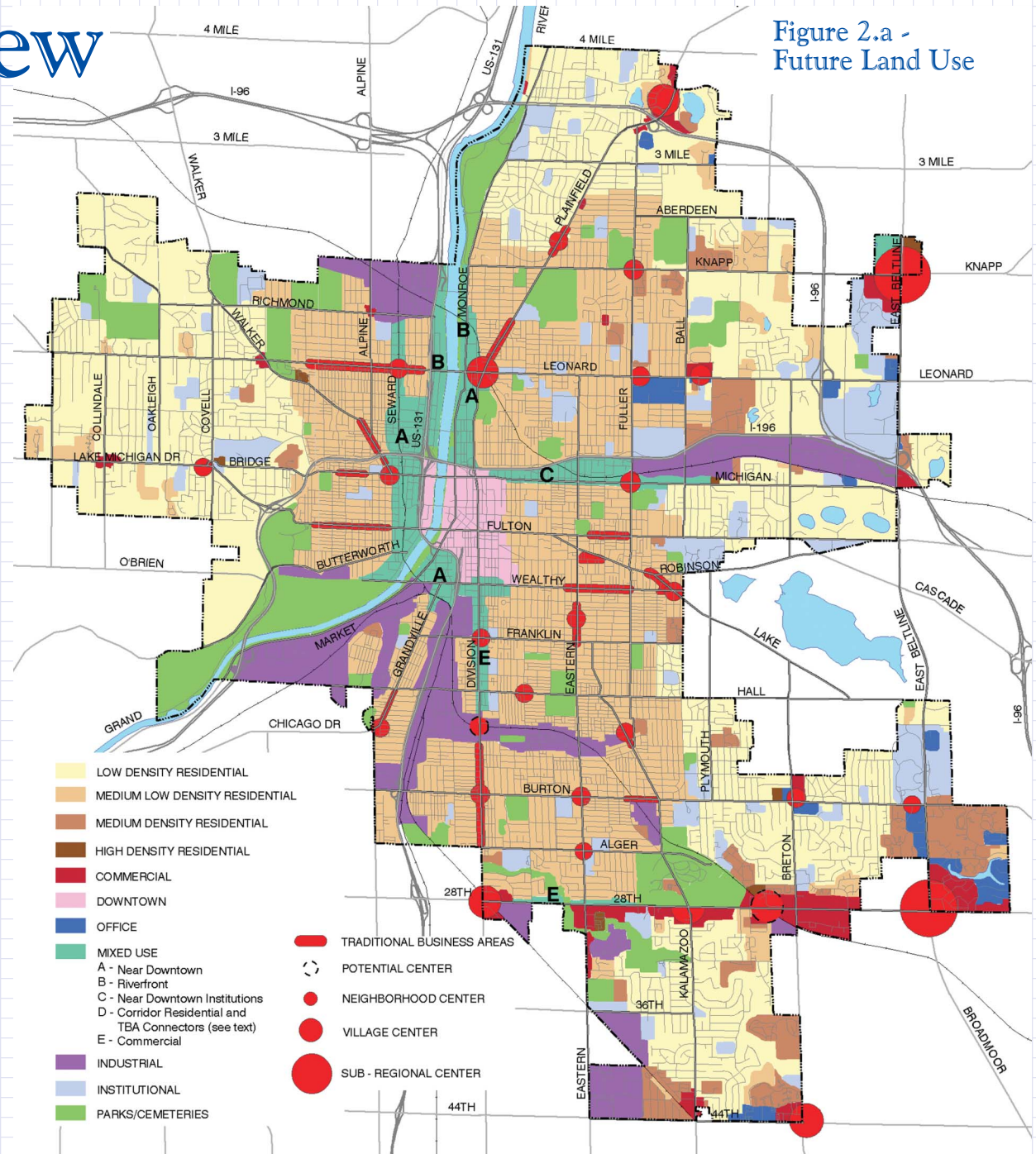
2.0 - Overview

2.1 - Introduction



The Master Plan establishes the type, character and density of development that is appropriate in

different areas of the community, including where new development might occur and where resources should be directed to revitalize or reuse already developed areas. It also provides a framework for identifying important natural and cultural resources to be protected and for determining what public investments in streets and other infrastructure will be needed.





Process

The Master Plan process was designed to maximize community involvement and to gain consensus on Plan recommendations. Community participation was structured to balance the need to take the planning process to the people and the need to bring people from across the city together to share perspectives and confirm citywide directions at key milestones. In each step of the planning process, community input helped to define the direction and refine the content of the Master Plan.

2.2 - Plan Contents

The Master Plan contains both text and graphics to present the visions, objectives and policies that are used to guide the growth and development of the community. A series of Figures (maps, images and tables) are included to illustrate how written recommendations should be translated into future land use and transportation patterns. Important maps include:

- Future Land Use Map (*see Figure 2.a - Page 21*)
- Transportation Framework Plan: Transit (*see Figure 6.b - Page 79*)
- Transportation Framework Plan: Streets (*see Figure 6.c - Page 80*)
- Open Space Framework Plan (*see Figure 7.c - Page 95*)

While these recommendations are presented on separate maps for clarity and readability, they are inter-related and should be considered cumulative.

2.3 - Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Map (*Page 21*) is the most complex of the maps included in the Master Plan. It presents the geographic framework for realizing the development themes described throughout the plan, and illustrates:

- generalized land use;
- residential density;
- mixed-use areas;
- traditional business areas; and
- neighborhood, village and sub-regional centers.

It is important to note that the Future Land Use Map illustrates general development patterns and is not intended to define land use on a lot-by-lot basis. These more detailed land use decisions will be made as the city's Zoning Ordinance is revised in response to the Master Plan.

Many Grand Rapids neighborhoods are strengthened by the diversity of uses contained within them. Smaller scale non-residential uses can co-exist compatibly with housing. For this reason, institutional uses, like neighborhood schools and churches, have only been identified if they occupy an area greater than about three acres. Similarly, a number of minor commercial areas are not shown on the Future Land Use Map.

While these areas offer important neighborhood services, and opportunities for business growth and employment, great care must be taken to insure that the scale of development in these areas is compatible with the character of the traditional development pattern in the neighborhood.

The Future Land Use Map illustrates:

Residential Areas - Areas where the predominant land use should be residential in character. These areas are also mapped by density, as follows:

- Low-Density Less than 5 units per acre
- Medium Low-Density 5 to 9.9 units per acre
- Medium-Density 10 to 14.9 units per acre
- High-Density 15 units per acre or more.

For additional information on residential densities, *see Chapter 3- Great Neighborhoods - Page 27.*

Mixed-Use Areas - Areas that are suited for a mixture of uses rather than a single use. These areas are mapped according to the following functional classifications:

A. Near Downtown

B. Riverfront

C. Downtown and Near-Downtown Institutions

D. Corridor Residential and Traditional Business Area (TBA) Connectors

E. Commercial Mixed-Use Areas

For additional information on mixed-use areas, see *Chapter 3- Great Neighborhoods - Page 27, Chapter 4 - Vital Business Districts - Page 47, and Chapter 5- A Strong Economy - Page 63.*

Traditional Business Areas - Existing commercial areas that can be organized as compact retail/mixed-use cores linked by higher density residential/mixed-use connectors and are designed at the neighborhood scale.

For additional information on traditional business areas, see *Chapter 4 - Vital Business Districts - Page 47.*

Mixed-Use Centers - Areas designed to encourage the restructuring of existing commercial areas as compact, walkable centers that include a mix of commercial, civic and residential uses and serve as a focus of a neighborhood or larger market area.

- Neighborhood Centers
- Village Centers
- Sub-Regional Centers

For additional information on mixed-use centers, see *Chapter 3 - Great Neighborhoods - Page 27, and Chapter 4 - Vital Business Districts - Page 47.*

Other Areas - Areas where the predominant land use is either commercial, office, industrial or institutional in character and which serve their respective traditional functions.



View of the West Side of Grand Rapids looking towards Downtown.

The scale of the symbols used to depict traditional business areas and mixed-use centers are intended to indicate the classification and function of the area and not the size of the area so designated. The text of the plan and additional area-specific plans should determine the exact boundaries of these areas.

Encouraging a mix of uses in some parts of the city is a critical plan recommendation that addresses many of the seven themes. The development objectives that apply to all mixed-use districts are presented in *Figure 3.g - Development Objectives for All Mixed-Use Areas - Page 37* and a description of the purpose and recommended uses for several types of mixed-use development are presented in *Figure 3.h - Purpose, Recommended Uses and Special Considerations for Mixed-Use Areas - Page 38* and *Figure 4.b - Hierarchy of Mixed-Use Centers - Page 56*. More information about each of these land use classifications is contained in the subsequent chapters.



¹Photo courtesy of ArtWorks Expanded Visions 2001 youth apprenticeship program.

¹ArtWorks photos are being used in Chapters 3-9 of the Master Plan to illustrate the diversity and vitality of our city's neighborhoods. ArtWorks, a nonprofit organization, employs youth ages 14 to 21 in year round arts-related work experiences. ArtWorks partners with local arts organizations to hire professional artists and youth ages 14 to 21 to produce artwork for public installation, performance and publication and for sale through local galleries. The youth, called apprentice artists, have a unique opportunity to earn a paycheck by creating original visual, literary, media and performing art.

2.4 - Themes

The visions, objectives and policies presented in Chapters 3 through 9 present the Master Plan recommendations organized around seven themes:

Great Neighborhoods



Great neighborhoods are the foundation of a great city; they are the physical and social expressions of community. Every neighborhood can be a great neighborhood by building on its own assets and special character.

Vital Business Districts



Vital business districts are critical components of a livable city and a strong economy. Great neighborhoods and vital business districts also go hand-in-hand; one cannot succeed without the success of the other. The choices that are made in locating and designing business districts are also important factors in creating a walkable city and supporting transit.

A Strong Economy



City government must help to foster a strong economy so that Grand Rapids' residents prosper, and revenues needed to provide important urban services and amenities are available. The citizens of Grand Rapids recognize the importance of continuing business and institutional investment, but seek to balance economic growth with priorities for neighborhoods, the environment and the quality of development.

Balanced Transportation



Grand Rapids' citizens support the coordination of transportation and land use decisions to reduce dependence on the automobile, provide choice in travel modes and to balance the needs for automobile and truck access

with the objectives of improving transit, making streets more walkable and creating a system of bike routes.

A City that Enriches Our Lives



The quality of life in Grand Rapids plays an important role in determining whether people will choose to live, shop, work and spend leisure time in the city. Many factors influence quality of life, including schools, environmental quality, open space and recreation and the attractiveness of the built environment. The Master Plan focuses on the Grand River, open space, the city's heritage and urban design as important quality of life considerations.

A City in Balance with Nature



People in Grand Rapids support planning approaches that protect natural resources, capitalize on existing infrastructure and honor the principles of Smart Growth. This chapter highlights plan recommendations that provide an alternative to sprawl, promote balanced transportation, protect valued natural resources and better manage stormwater runoff.

Partnerships



The planning policies that guide development in the metropolitan region will significantly influence Grand Rapids' success in achieving important planning objectives. In addition, collaboration among city departments, residents, property owners, businesses and institutions will be essential bringing the Master Plan's recommendations to fruition. Both regional and community partnerships are needed.

2.5 - Development Character

Because the quality and character of development is as important to the citizens of Grand Rapids as the overall patterns of future land use, *Chapter 10 - Development Character - Page 117* presents sample development guidelines. These guidelines address the following topics:

- mixed-use;
- higher quality and, higher density residential development;
- green space in the central city.

These guideline topics were selected from a much longer list of candidates suggested by community input throughout the master planning process. In part, the guideline examples were chosen to help clarify key master plan recommendations (mixed-use, alternative models for new housing development) and to augment others (open space network, walkable streets, stormwater management). The examples provide a template for developing guidelines on additional topics in the future. Among the most important of these additional topics are guidelines for protecting the valued characteristics of existing neighborhoods. As starting point for this effort, a preliminary map of five neighborhood types, with descriptions of their distinguishing characteristics, is provided in *Chapter 10 - Development Character - Page 117*.

The principals of urbanism are providing new models for creating mixed-use centers at the neighborhood, village and sub-regional scale.

2.6 - Area-Specific Plans

Chapter 11 - Area-Specific Plans - Page 151 describes a recommended process for the development and approval of area-specific plans as potential future amendments to the Master Plan. These area-specific plans will build on the Master Plan recommendations to provide more detailed land use plans and development guidelines for proposed mixed-use areas. It is also anticipated that area-specific plans will be prepared for many of the city's neighborhoods, especially where revitalization is a priority.

2.7 - Implementation

Implementation will be achieved over an extended period through the cooperative efforts of the public, private and non-profit sectors. *Chapter 12 - Implementation - Page 157* presents an Action Plan with 12 action items to achieve the promise of the Master Plan.



The Grand River is an economic development and quality of life asset. The Plan encourages a change in land use along the riverfront from industry to open space and mixed-use.



